

BOWMAN SCULPTURE

CAMILLE CLAUDEL (French, 1864-1943)

Born in 1864 in northern France, Camille Claudel was a French sculptor who was not fully appreciated during her lifetime but has since become world renowned for her unique figurative works in bronze and marble. Claudel now has her own museum, the Camille Claudel Museum in Nogent-sur-Seine, and her works are considered integral to any serious collection of sculpture from this period. She is also widely known for her controversial, and ultimately tragic, love affair with Auguste Rodin, which has been highlighted by two films, *Camille Claudel* and *Rodin*, along with numerous books.

Claudel began sculpting from a young age, modelling her siblings out of clay before convincing the family cook to fire them in the oven. Her early work impressed their neighbour, sculptor Alfred Boucher, who encouraged Claudel's family to support her artistic studies.

Moving to Paris in 1882, she began her formal studies at the Académie Colarossi, as it was one of the few institutions allowing female students at the time. Claudel was only 17 when she met Auguste Rodin at the Académie Colarossi in 1883, when the sculptor took over teaching classes from Alfred Boucher. Claudel's work impressed Rodin immediately and she became his studio assistant two years later.

“Right away, Rodin recognized Mademoiselle's prodigious gifts. Right away, he realized that she had in her own nature, an admirable and incomparable temperament,” wrote Claudel's friend and first biographer, Mathias Morhardt. (Mahon, 2011. p. 156)

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Camille Claudel in 1884 (aged 19)

Between 1885 and 1890, Claudel was Rodin's muse, lover and collaborator, never allowing their affair to interrupt her duties as studio assistant. The two sculptors worked side by side often during what was one of the most extraordinary periods of creative collaboration in art history.

Their influence in each other's creative process is evident in many of their pieces made during this time, such as Claudel's modelling of the hands and feet on Rodin's *The Burgers of Calais* and the amorous intimacy of the two figures in Claudel's *The Waltz*.